THE RAGTIMER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1973

PUBLISHED BY
THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

SPECIAL SALE OF SOCIETY

REPRINT SHEET MUSIC

We have been urged to make a new music sale offering, similar to the SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY SALE of last year which proved to be a popular package. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THIS OFFER IS MADE ON A LIMITED BASIS (Individual titles may be purchased at the regular catalogue price.). The advantage of bulk buying will be again apparent.

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The above 15 titles by 15 different composers - $5.00 postpaid

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RECORDS FOR SALE

As a service to members, THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. is currently in a position to fill orders for the following records. All prices quoted include charge for postage.

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EBM#4 - Sissle & Blake Early Rare Recordings Volume 1

This album features the famous team of Sissle and Blake in their original, now rare, recordings: Baltimore Buzz, Love Will Find A Way, Oriental Blues, I'm Craving For That Kind of Love, Bandana Days, Pickaninny Shoes, Broadway Blues, I've Got The Blues, I've Got The Red White & Blues, I'm A Doggone Struttin' Fool, Boo Hoo Hoo, Down Hearted Blues, Waitin' For The Evenin' Mail, Sweet Henry.

FOUNDED 1962
INCORPORATED 1970

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non - profit corporation having the following objects:

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

PLEASE RENEW

Your membership for 1974 in THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. NOW

Our deadline is January 1, 1974

Use the attached renewal form.

RAGTIME...
UNDER YOUR HAT

It's like the springtime of RAGTIME as we reach the fall of the year in Toronto. The 9th Annual Bash of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. promises to be another smashing success at the weekend of October 13, 1973. We are thrilled at the reopening of CLUB 76 as a ragtime emporium, where Ragtime Bob Darch is currently holding court for the benefit of the returning devotees.

Even so, there is another side to the business of keeping RAGTIME alive on a world-wide basis. It concerns YOU and THE SOCIETY! Once again we have reached the time of year when renewals for the upcoming year of 1974 are being solicited. The 1974 renewal form and payment should be in our hands prior to January 1, 1974 (SEE RENEWAL FORM ATTACHED TO THIS ISSUE OF THE RAGTIMER). Please do not put off sending in your renewal.

In the early part of each year we revise our records. If you don't renew on time you create separate handling work for the hard-working few and a disappointment for yourself when THE RAGTIMER stops arriving in your mail. We all know that once you have the "ragtime bug" for real, you can't shake it off.

The "mystery rag" sheet music cover on the back page of our last issue of THE RAGTIMER is titled "PEARL OF THE HAREM". The transfer of colour definition to black and white outfoxed our technical experts.

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SCOTT JOPLIN REDISCOVERED - PART 7

Much of the current wave of interest in the music of Scott Joplin has developed from performances of his opera "Treemonisha" and selections taken from it. These have occurred with increasing frequency over the past two years. Key events in these recent developments include performances in New York, Atlanta, Washington (Wolf Trap) and Carbondale (Southern Illinois University).

Members of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. who are of long standing will remember that the 230 page, 1911 opera by Scott Joplin was reproduced in a limited edition, for research and study purposes, by the SOCIETY in the mid-sixties. While copies are no longer available from the SOCIETY, the opera is included in the collected works of Scott Joplin published later by the New York Public Library.

Karl Kramer wrote the preface to the copy of "Treemonisha" reproduced by our own SOCIETY. Karl concluded his preface with these words: "The present resurgence of baroque music indicates that the past is constantly being rediscovered. Let's hope that some day this will happen to "Treemonisha".

In a few short years, the expression of a wistful hope has turned into a reality. Because of all that has happened since, Karl Kramer's document of faith must never be forgotten. Going back then to 1965, here is the preface he wrote:

TREEMONISHA
Its Place In American Opera
By Karl Kramer

The sophisticated patron of La Scala or the Met would probably deride the term "American Opera", and heatedly deny that there is any such thing. Certainly, in comparison to German, French, Italian and Russian opera, he would not be far wrong. There have been operas written and produced in the United States, but the quality is suspect and the quantity is very limited. For example, the works of Rossini and Donizetti alone number over a hundred, compared to the bare baker's dozen operas written in this country.

The first American opera was William Henry Fry's "Leonora", presented in Philadelphia in 1845, followed by his second work, "Notre-Dame of Paris" in 1858. (It is a sad reflection on our national ego that the libretto of "Leonora" was translated into Italian for its New York performance.) Completely forgotten today, Fry's music has been described by scholars as "colonial primitive", a somewhat vague definition.

Also adhering entirely to European traditions are the three operas composed by Walter Damrosch from 1896 to 1937, and two by Deems Taylor in 1927 and 1931. None of these was outstanding and all were sufficiently imitative to earn the criticism of being ingenious mixtures of Wagner and Puccini. Other recent but not so well known operas written in this country are Gruenberg's "Emperor Jones" (1933), Douglas Moore's "Devil and Daniel Webster" (1938), and two Virgil Thomson operas based on texts by Gertrude Stein, also written in the thirties.

The latest and most popular of our operatic composers is Gian-Carlo Menotti ("The Medium", "Amahl and the Night Visitors", "The Consul", etc.). Due to television his music has probably been heard by more people than that of all other American operatic composers combined. However, Menotti follows entirely in the Italian tradition; even his most ardent admirers would scarcely contend that his music is either native or American.

But what is native American music? Both Charles Cadman and Victor Herbert tried scores based on their conceptions of American Indian themes. Herbert was first with "Natoma" in 1911. It was more Broadway than the Dakota Plains. Neither of the Cadman works remained in repertoire, though both were produced by major companies.

So it is scarcely surprising that the remaining three operas on our small list are Negro in inspiration and character, though only one, "Treemonisha", was written by a Negro. The others are "Koanga" by Frederic Delius, and "Porgy and Bess" by George Gershwin.

Purists will say that Delius was not an American, but an English citizen of German ancestry. However, his first formal instruction came from a Brooklyn visitor to the forlorn Florida orange grove where the young Frederic was sent by his family to get him away from his dreams of music. It was here that he became strongly influenced by Negro songs, which later resulted not only in his opera "Koanga", but also the "Florida Suite" and "Appalachia". "Koanga" is completely American in story and musical mood; the libretto is adapted from an American novel of slavery days in Louisiana, and the music is a combination of Negro and Creole themes. In spite of its American flavor, "Koanga" has never been performed in this country (only in Germany and England), although much of the opera has been recorded by the Delius champion, Sir Thomas Beecham.

The Delius opera was written about the turn of the century, a dozen or so years before "Treemonisha", and there is little likelihood that Joplin had ever heard of Delius or his music. The only similarities between the two operas are the mid-nineteenth century southern Negro characters and backgrounds. Delius' work is a grand opera in the classic tragic style, and his romantic, lush harmonies and sophisticated construction are far away from the precise patterns and rhythms of Joplin's simple field and folk songs, though both share a feeling for melody, clear and self-contained. A comparison between Delius' Creole dance, "La Calinda", and Joplin's finale, "A Real Slow Drag", illustrates the tremendous difference between the two works.

According to Ira Gershwin, who wrote the lyrics, his brother had never heard either the Delius or Joplin operas when he started "Porgy and Bess". George Gershwin's first attempt at Negro opera was a short one-act piece presented in the "Scandals of 1922". It was called "Blue Monday", (later changed to "135th St.") and was so violent and tragic that it was cut from the show after the opening night. Not until years later was it performed again -- on television. "Porgy and Bess" opened in 1935, and its first run was not too successful, lasting only 124 performances. The critics were not very laudatory and could not quite agree whether it was an opera or a play with music. Today it is generally accepted that "Porgy and Bess" is an American folk opera, and a revival in 1953 had a long run. Oddly enough, Ira Gershwin states that the music was intended to be a welding of Hebrew and Negro melodies.

In the early 1900's ragtime was probably the only form of native music with enough classical pretension to be developed into an operatic form. Scott Joplin and James Scott, followed by Joseph Lamb, had molded simple dances and cakewalks into what has now become known as classic ragtime (to distinguish it from its odious imitator -- the syncopated popular song, wrongly dubbed "a rag"). While deceptive in its simplicity, true ragtime was both formal and free -- formal in adhering to the rigid principles of its own creation, yet completely free from the rhythmic patterns of standard classical piano music. Many classic rags are intensely dramatic and easily transformable into operatic form; for example: Joplin's "Magnetic Rag", "The Entertainer", "A Breeze from Alabama", and Joseph Lamb's "Topliner", which suggests Isolde's "Liebestod" done in ragtime.

As early as 1912, Irving Berlin talked about writing a genuine ragtime opera. Whether this was for publicity or was a genuine aspiration, the project never took form. The nearest Berlin came was a few years later in the Castle Revue, "Watch Your Step", whose first act finale was a lively version of the quartette from "Rigoletto", sung in ragtime. The ghost of Verdi, pale of face and white of beard, appeared in a front box and pleaded "please don't rag my melody", while down on the stage the singers and dancers did a syncopated accompaniment to this famous old rouser, complete with snapping fingers, shaking shoulders, and the usual clever Berlin lyrics.

Berlin was probably completely unaware that a ragtime opera had already been composed -- Joplin's now lost "Guest of Honor", performed once in St. Louis in 1903. Though the score has completely disappeared, a recent discovery of the first three pages of the manuscript list a few provocative titles, which in the words of Max Morath "are enough to make your mouth water" -- "Missouri Call", "Freedom's Etude", "State Fair Rag", and "Elijah's Call".

Joplin's second opera, "Treemonisha", might have remained in similar obscurity had he not printed it at his own expense. A few copies remained in hiding and have recently emerged, through the efforts of Rudi Blesh, dean of the recent ragtime renaissance, and co-author with Harriet Janis of the ragtime bible, "They All Played Ragtime". Despite its interest to members of the ragtime societies, "Treemonisha" is not a ragtime opera. It is a native folk opera, and only occasionally employs the type of syncopation characteristic of Joplin's piano music.

The opera was copyrighted and printed in 1911, but not until 1915 was it given a single dismal performance in an obscure New York rehearsal hall, without benefit of scenery or orchestra. It is not surprising that there was little enthusiasm from the small audience. In the sociology of the theatre world, the tremendous difference between presenting a Negro opera in Joplin's day and putting on a work by Gershwin twenty-four years later is not measurable in time alone. The offering Joplin took to New York must have seemed ludicrous to established producers, if they had deigned to examine it -- an all-Negro opera by a backwoods ragtime composer. That he dared to make the effort proved his courage and burning faith in his music.

The story of "Treemonisha" is a simple fairy tale. It is a Red River "Hansel and Gretel", with the "conjur" men taking the part of the wicked witch. The grand finale, though, clearly sums up Joplin's major theme, that the betterment of his race can only come from education, religion and most of all -- music.

We can only guess why Joplin decided to do his own libretto. Presumably his education was limited, and he had made few ventures into the writing of lyrics, although there were some early sentimental songs, the rousing "Ragtime Dance", and the lost "Guest of Honor". But in his mind the fire burned, and he fed it with his own story and words, which with all their innocence somehow seem strangely to fit the music.

Unlike the slick rhyming and sophisticated word images of Ira Gershwin's "Porgy" or Oscar Hammerstein's "Old Man River", Joplin's lyrics are as unpretentious as the proverbial wild rose. Though he uses the language of the backwoods Negro, his message is clear, and often is conveyed beautifully and tenderly as in Monisha's "Sacred Tree" and "I Want My Child".

The opera is made up of twenty-five numbers plus an overture and prelude. Most of the numbers are distinct entities, much more separable than those of European opera. Though they make up a complete pattern, each can be sung, played and evaluated on its own, and each number is titled and numbered. The longest sequence of continued exposition and action is the narrative opening, "Bag of Luck". This introduces the main characters -- Ned, Monisha, Treemonisha and the "conjur" men -- with the theme of education and enlightenment pitted against superstition.

The score is easily divided into two discernible classifications: folk frolics and narration numbers. The frolic songs are nearest to the folk tradition and are much more expressive of Joplin than are the operatic sections. Among the best of these are "Going Around", "Good Advice", "Aunt Dinah", "Wrong Is Never Right", and the dance finale, "A Real Slow Drag". Quite possibly, "Wrong Is Never Right" is the best number in the opera.

This exaltation of the folk songs is not meant to disparage the rest of the score. There are several outstanding themes and arias that need more understanding but have great appeal. These include the exultant Treemonisha theme, "The Sacred Tree", and the riproaring "When Villains Ramble Far and Near", which sounds as if it had stepped right out of Gilbert and Sullivan. Joplin may not have intended this number as near comedy, but is evident throughout that he had a sneaking fondness for the "conjur" men, and in the finale they are forgiven for their attempt to kill the heroine.

The one rather surprising aspect of the opera is that it is completely lacking in that brooding melancholy which characterizes many of Joplin's piano rags. The score is pure happiness from beginning to end, and even Monisha's sad songs seem to convey a sentimental pleasure and assurance that all is well or soon will be. Not since "Maple Leaf" had Scott Joplin written such happy music. Perhaps he had such high hopes for his masterpiece that the excitement and enthusiasm became part of the music. It is certain that after the sad single performance of "Treemonisha" his melancholy became more marked, as shown in "Magnetic Rag", and was soon followed by his eventual mental decline.

There are justifiable criticisms of "Treemonisha": the overture is too long, pretentious, and even downright bombastic. Many numbers use the popular song construction of verse and chorus, and the repetitions are without variation, except in "Real Slow Drag",

which has three movements. Occasionally the composer wandered from the path of simple folk music, misled by both bad counsel and the alien influence of the European operas he knew. In the opening number there are passages of pure Verdi. Yet to counter these minor flaws, the Prelude is an ingenious little gem, and the Verdi phrases are interspersed with such nuggets as "she is the only educated person of her race."

When plans were made to reprint "Treemonisha", the point was raised that since this was not the first American opera, nor the first Negro opera, what is its value or place in American music? Is Joplin's music really of classical importance? As an admittedly prejudiced observer, I believe that Scott Joplin was a great composer of a unique style of American music, and, furthermore, that he never wrote a cheap or trite phrase in his life. But as for "Treemonisha", the final judgment must come from time itself, and after it has been ably performed with full orchestra and settings.

A start in this direction, and probably the first serious attention given Joplin's opera in over 50 years, took place in 1965 when excerpts from "Treemonisha" were performed by the Utah State University Concert Chorale under the direction of Ted Puffer. Seven selections from the score are recorded on Portents Record #3 including: The Overture, "We're Goin' Around", "The Sacred Tree", "We Will Rest Awhile", "Aunt Dinah Has Blowed De Horn", The Prelude to Act III and "A Real Slow Drag".

Who knows what will be played a hundred years from now, and whether "Treemonisha" will be studied as the classic example of early American folk music? The present resurgence of baroque music indicates that the past is constantly being rediscovered. Let's hope that some day this will happen to "Treemonisha".

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RAGTIME BOOK REVIEW

(Ed. Comment: RAGTIME; you've come a long way baby! For years we made frequent references in "THE RAGTIMER" to the lonely work by Rudi Blesh and the late Harriet Janis "THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME", first published in 1950. In the early part of 1973, on the occasion of Eubie Blake's 90th birthday, the work of Robert Kimball and William Bolcom "REMINISCING WITH SISSLE AND BLAKE" came off the presses of the Viking Press Inc. 625 Madison Avenue, N. Y. 10022. The book offers an informative text that is overshadowed by a pictorial life history of the Sissle and Blake partnership. It contains a treasure house of visual memories. But the ragtime saga continues to be told in two further publications which make 1973 a bumper year in literature devoted to the subject of ragtime.)

"THE ART OF RAGTIME" - by William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedel. Form and Meaning of an Original Black American Art, with assistance from Michael Polad and Richard Thompson published by Louisiana State University Press ($10.00) C. 1973.

This is not only a history of Ragtime but a detailed musicological analysis of the era, the genre, the total spectrum of the Art of Ragtime as a wholly separate and complete entity within the great world of music.

It covers the origins of Ragtime through the 1890's to the peak in 1915 as well as to the present day and treats at length the work of the three great classic composers - Scott Joplin, James Scott and Joseph Lamb. It covers their lives, their styles and their methods of composition and performance.

There are numerous excerpts from ragtime compositions, complete scores of same, sheet music, cover, illustrations and a very comprehensive structural and thematic analysis of Joplin's folk opera "Treemonisha".

This well-written, carefully researched (with references and numerous footnotes) and handsomely printed book joins the Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis "They All Played Ragtime" as the only real reference books on Ragtime. They are both indispensable to the student of Ragtime and a must for every reference library.

Mr. Schafer is associate professor of English at Berea College, and Mr. Riedel is professor of music at the University of Minnesota. Their collaboration has produced a great addition to the story of Ragtime.

We are very pleased to add that Mr. Schafer and Mr. Polad have been supporters and members of The Ragtime Society Inc. for several years. The Society is gratified and flattered to be mentioned in the book and to have "The Ragtimer" quoted several times.

Perhaps this reviewer is prejudiced since this book so eloquently expresses his own feelings and beliefs concerning Ragtime. The Ragtimer will be pleased to print other reviews or comments received.

Reviewed by Allen MacInnes

"RECORDED RAGTIME -- 1897-1958" by David Jasen - an Archon Book from The Shoe String Press Inc., 995 Sherman Avenue, Hamden, Conn. 06514 ($8.50) C. 1973.

Dave has added an important reference book to the small but growing library of works devoted to the subject of ragtime. While the major purpose is to establish a thorough discography of recorded ragtime, the book serves a much broader intent. As a well established and recognized authority on the subject, Dave has authored a captivating introduction to ragtime which is at once an interesting preparation for that which follows. As a member of The Ragtime Society, Dave has often demonstrated his pianistic artistry at Society events. Because Dave is a professional performer in his own right, he has not forgotten the interests of his fellow musicians. In the result a section of the book is devoted to a useful cross reference to composers and their works.

The 155 page book presents a "full meal" of information about recorded ragtime. The data for the discography lists the performers, the record company, record number

and recording date under each composition. As examples there are 31 different performances listed of Kerry Mills' "At A Georgia Camp Meeting", while Maple Leaf Rag accounts for some two pages of listed performances. The number of different performances listed for Euday Bowman's "Twelfth Street Rag" is staggering. The work involved in research is apparent throughout the book.

Dave knows his subject apart from his deep interest in ragtime; he also actively teaches the history of modern American music at C.W. Post College. He has produced a source book that is a must for ragtimers and a major reference for musicologists, librarians and collectors of ragtime records and sheet music.

Reviewed by Jack Cuff

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TOM NOEL PRESENTS

..... MARK TWAIN AT HOME

By Jack Cuff

TOM NOEL AS MARK TWAIN

Tom has been a regular attender at our Annual Ragtime "BASH" at Toronto for some years. Fellow members have heard Tom playing ragtime along with the best but few realized that Tom in his professional career as an actor, was drawn to his one-man show impersonations of Mark Twain because of the discovery that the same Mark Twain liked and played ragtime on the piano for relaxation. Presenting Mark Twain was a natural for Tom as an actor, combined with Tom's opportunity to be himself as a ragtimer.

Tom is a native of Fortville, Indiana. He completed his Hoosier State background as a product of Indiana University. While at university he decided upon acting for a career. He has never had to look back. Today he is highly regarded as a prominent Broadway actor.

Substantial evidence can be drawn from the publicity he has received:

"His many professional credits include the successful MAN WITH A LOAD OF MISCHIEF which ran for 8 months, the National Tour of SUNRISE AT CAMPOBELLO, YOUNG ABE LINCOLN on Broadway, and extensive appearances in Musical Tent Theatres up and down the eastern seaboard and throughout the mid-west. His Television appearances include HALL-MARK HALL OF FAME, EDGE OF NIGHT, SECRET STORM, LOVE OF LIFE, THE DOCTORS, THE UNTOUCHABLES, PHIL SILVER'S SHOW, LASSIE, and many others. His most recent motion pictures are FUNNY GIRL and THE BOSTON STRANGLER.

Then in 1969 after years of personal research, Tom came up with his own unique presentation of MARK TWAIN AT HOME which proved to be a winner on the college circuit. He is in continuous demand as quoted responses indicate:

"We heartily recommend Mr. Noel to college audiences all over the country. His delightful MARK TWAIN AT HOME charmed ..... one of the biggest hits in recent years here."

Phoenix College

"Your performance was the highlight of our year as testified by the spontaneous standing ovation. Hopefully you will be back."

Lake Head University, Canada

"Thank you for a truly delightful and entertaining evening. The most favorable comment concerned the portion in which you played the piano. No one in the audience expected to hear music as part of the presentation. We were all delighted."

Upper Darby Forum, Philadelphia

Not many of us are given the opportunity to involve an avocation like Ragtime in our principal vocation. On those rare occasions when Tom is able to return to his home haunts in Brooklyn, it is more than likely that you will find him playing ragtime piano down at the local corner bar. Tom Noel at home is really not much different than MARK TWAIN AT HOME, provided there is a piano available. You can't afford to miss a Tom Noel performance if he turns up in your part of the world.

The following is a listing of his known scheduled appearances over the next few months:

1973

October 8 -- Gordon Junior College, Barnesville, Georgia
October 9 -- Walters State Community College, Morristown, Tenn.
October 10 -- Chowan College, Murfreesboro, N. C.
October 17 -- Galveston Community College, Galveston, Texas
October 18 -- Louisiana College, Pineville, La.
October 19 -- Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas
October 25 -- Middlesex Community College, Edison, N. J.

October 26 -- Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pa.
November 5 -- Madison Technical College, Madison, Wis.
November 6 -- Moraine Park Institute, Fon Du Lac, Wis.
November 7 -- Waukesha County Institute, Waukesha, Wis.
November 8 -- Weber State College, Ogden, Utah
November 9 -- Missouri Western University, St. Joseph, Mo.

1974

January 14 -- Penn State University, Reading, Pa.
January 15 -- Officers Wives Club, Colorado Springs, Colorado
February 1 -- The Hill School, Pottstown, Pa.
February 7 -- Monmouth College, West Longbranch, N. J.
April 16 -- Jefferson State Junior College, Birmingham, Alabama
April 18 -- Louisiana Tech., Ruston, La.
April 23 -- Cochise College, Douglas, Arizona.

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by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Angel S-36060 'Scott Joplin: The Red Back Book', by The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, conducted by Gunther Schuller.

Selections: The Cascades; Sunflower Slow Drag; The Chrysanthemum; The Entertainer (piano solo); The Rag Time Dance; Sugar Cane; The Easy Winners; The Entertainer; Sunflower Slow Drag (piano solo); Maple Leaf Rag.

Personnel: Charles Lewis, trumpet; Victor Sawa, clarinet; Ray Cutler, trombone; Juan Rimirez-Hernandez and Tibor Pusztai, violins; Juan Dandridge, viola; Bruce Coppock, cello; Dave Reskin, flute and piccolo; Myron Romanul, piano; Gary Ofenloch, tuba; Michael Singer, string bass; Mark Belair, drums.

Klavier KS-510 'Great Scott! Ragtime On The Harpsichord', by Wm. Neil Roberts.

Selections: Peacherine Rag; The Easy Winners; Harmony Club Waltz; Maple Leaf Rag; Heliotrope Bouquet; Pine Apple Rag; Sunflower Slow Drag; Bethena; Swipesy Cakewalk; Elite Syncopations; Stoptime Rag.

Eubie Blake Music EBM-4 'Sissle & Blake'

Selections: Baltimore Buzz; Love Will Find A Way; Oriental Blues; I'm Craving For That Kind Of Love; Bandana Days; Pickaninny Shoes; Broadway Blues; I've Got The Blues; I've Got The Red White & Blues; I'm A Doggone Struttin' Fool; Boo Hoo Hoo; Down Hearted Blues; Waitin' For The Evenin' Mail; Sweet Henry.

Personnel: Noble Sissle, vocals and Eubie Blake, piano, except that 'Baltimore Buzz' is performed by the 'Shuffle Along' pit band.

EBM-4 is available @ $5.95 postpaid from Eubie Blake Music, 284-A Stuyvesant Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11221.

Because I can't wait to begin talking about it, let's open today's column by rhapsodizing over what may be the definitive recording of the famed 'Red Back Book' arrangements of rags for small dance orchestra. Unlike previous efforts in this direction, which usually involved jazzmen with the desire but not the technique to handle written music cleanly and effortlessly, Gunther Schuller's group of twelve New England Conservatory students brings out all of the dynamics, spirit and joy which ragtimers had expected to find in these manuscripts.

The bright tempos may surprise you, but they sound exactly right to me, particularly in view of the fact that this music was written for dancing in a day when cakewalks, one-steps, etc., moved right along. The musicians have more than enough skill to deal with the pace, and the overall effort conjures up a picture of a crowded ballroom swaying to the infectious rhythm.

There's plenty of variety in the performances, from the lush string quartet passage in 'The Chrysanthemum', to the boisterous ride-out on 'Sunflower Slow Drag'. Top honors in my book go to the full-length version of 'The Ragtime Dance', which brings out every nuance of Joplin's melodic gifts, gives a clear insight into his larger ambitions for the music, and bursts with joy throughout.

For contrast, the piano solo versions of two of the numbers are included to fill out the LP. Romanul turns in a brisk, correct job on both, a la the well-known Rifkin recordings.

Add top-grade recording quality, plus literate, informative liner notes by Joplin authority Vera Brodsky Lawrence, and you've got an LP that's a 'must'. It may be that this one has particular appeal to the ragtimers who prefer the cooler, more classical school of playing, but I really can't imagine anyone so grim as to be able to resist the zest, cheer and skill found in this record.

The classicists among you will surely be interested in Klavier's LP of harpsichord solos of Joplin compositions performed impeccably in flawless fidelity by Wm. Neil Roberts. I have had very little exposure to harpsichord music, but the instrument used on this recording has a far broader range of expression than any harpsichord I've heard -- certainly equal to the demands of Joplin's music. Moreover, given Joplin's gift for light, lilting melody and his high aspirations for his works, an all-Joplin program would seem a natural for a talented harpsichordist.

Oddly enough, though, I don't find the record as enjoyable as I expected to, and it's hard for me to say why. Perhaps the somewhat fuzzier sound of the harpsichord, as compared to the piano, clouds the rhythmic flow too much for my taste -- this characteristic of the instrument is particularly evident when Joplin moves away from single-note melodies into fully chorded passages in both hands. At any rate, I find 'Stoptime Rag' by far the most satisfying track, and I suspect that it's because the foot-tapping required by the score provides a type of pulse that the harpsichord can't. On the other selections, generally taken at medium tempos, I found my attention tending to wander.

You may have some of the same difficulty with Eubie Blake's new LP, principally because it is not really a ragtime record but rather a reissue of some of the performances that made Sissle & Blake one of the top vaudeville acts of the 1920's. As such, it is of keen interest in evaluating influences on the style of the last survivor of ragtime's earliest days. Blake's role here is strictly one of accompanist to Sissle's spirited but dated vocal technique -- except for Eubie's hot solo chorus on 'Sweet Henry', a dandy track that closes the LP with a bang. Sound quality is quite good, considering that most tunes were recorded in the early twenties, with Sissle's excellent diction bringing the lyrics clearly through. Eubie's many fans, and nostalgia buffs, take note of this one.

Three LPs, each offering something a little different but still of interest to ragtimers, and each hitting its own special target right on the bull's-eye. Can't really ask for more than that, even if all three won't appeal to everyone.

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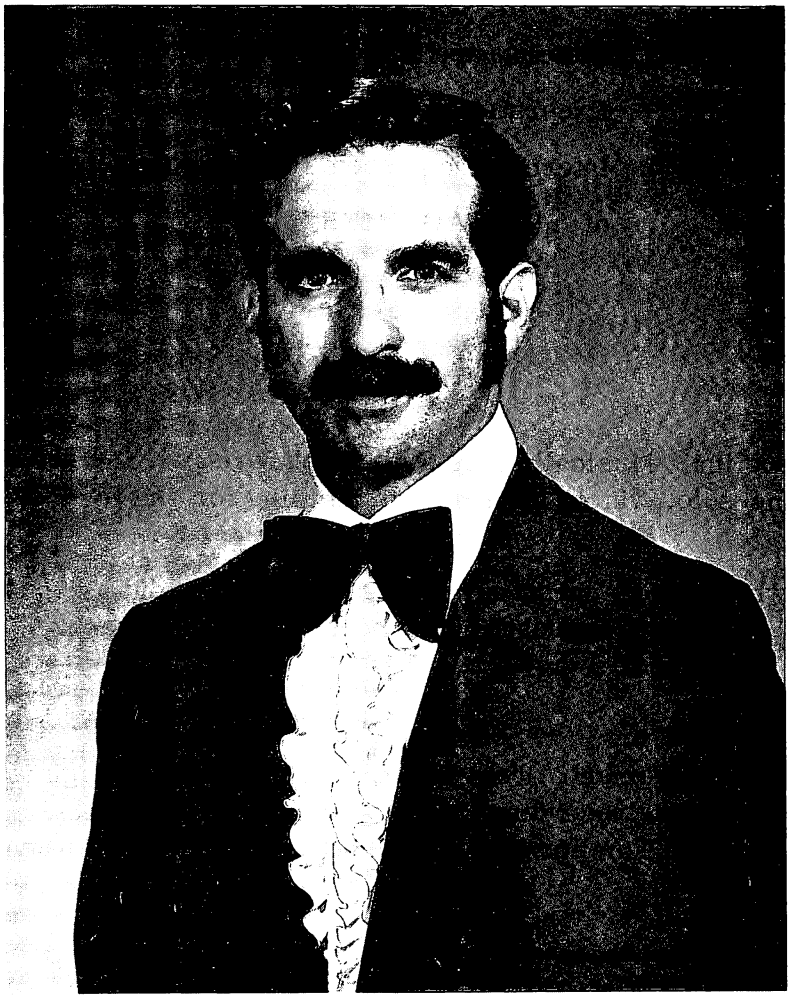
RAGTIME RECITAL

By Charles B. Davis, Jr.

Ragtime performers come with all kinds of credentials; many come with a well deserved reputation. Recently it was my pleasure to attend a ragtime recital given by Dr. Thomas Warburton at U. N. C. in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Dr. Warburton is a graduate of the universities of Virginia and Michigan and holds a Ph. D. in theory and music history. He has given recitals at both of these institutions as well as at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C. last year.

Not only is he an excellent pianist, he is also an articulate spokesman of ragtime. His introduction to ragtime came through Bill Allbright at the University of Michigan with



Dr. Thomas Warburton

some of Scott Joplin's rags. His playing is similar to that of Bill Bolcom and John Arpin.

The program for the evening of June 25th included the following by Joplin: The Entertainer, Stoptime Rag, Magnetic Rag and Maple Leaf Rag.

He explained his way of playing each rag in the following manner: Sedalia was the hub of early ragtime activity and the style of playing was probably slow and sedate. In this frame he played The Entertainer, and Magnetic Rag. It was noticeable that he did not use the walking bass in the latter as did Joplin on his Connorized piano roll.

He explained the St. Louis style as being closer to the shout style of the Harlem pianists. (Jelly Roll demonstrates this on his L. O. C. recording as well as on Herwin 401.) In this style he played Maple Leaf Rag and Stoptime.

Most of the people attending the recital had never heard ragtime performed authentically and they enjoyed it as much as this reporter who has done a lot of listening.

For an encore he played George Gershwin's That Certain Feeling, as Gershwin recorded for a player roll years ago. He transcribed this into musical notation from a recording. Gershwin's style is a beautiful synthesis of the Harlem stride and novelty styles of New York in the teens and twenties.

He then ended with "Behemoth-Two Step" from Grand Sonata in Rag by Bill Albright. This is a beautiful piece with some wild modulations and beautiful breaks - one that not only strikes the ears but leaves the hands limp after playing. (1)

All in all it was an excellent recital and I hope to have the pleasure of hearing the good professor again.

(1) I was told that Bill has recently recorded for Jazzology and its Jazz Piano Heritage Series. He has written in the rag form and his works are published by Jobert in Paris. The distributor for Jobert in the U. S. is Elkan-Vogel.

LETTERS

Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

Greetings from North Carolina. Musically it is a bit quiet here ..... I've been making it on the living room piano-solo, which is a remarkable thing for one formerly addicted to dark smoky rooms.

Got to play with the "Mother's Boys" about a month ago when they did a concert for the Charleston, W. Va. Jazz Club. Had a great time. Keep up the good work.

Tom Shea
Raleigh, N. C., U. S. A.

(Ed. Comment: Thanks for the encouragement. Tom is one of the SOCIETY originals. It was his artistry that launched us in the recording field - i. e. RSR01 and RSR02. THE RAGTIMER of today owes much to Tom for his earlier help and hard work when he resided in the Detroit area.)

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For your information and records I am enclosing the programme of a recent student recital at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore featuring a 17-year old oboist and a 15-year old pianist. The latter played music by Scarlatti, Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Griffes and Joplin.

Imagine such a thing happening ten years ago, or even five!

William Hyder
Baltimore, Maryland, U. S. A.

(Ed. Comment: It seems that our collective efforts to promote the status of classical ragtime has not been in vain. The young pianist was Miss Prochazka and the finale number - Scott Joplin's Original Rags.)

****

We had a small ragtime festival at the University of Minnesota, May 3-5, featuring a program with local ragtimers Michael Polad, Richard (Butch) Thompson and Lowell Schreyer (banjo); a program with a local ragtime orchestra (the Hall Bros. Ragtime Orchestra) and Max Morath; and a panel discussion with Rudi Blesh, William Russell, Max Morath and Schafer/Riedel. William Russell also played fiddle with the

ragtime orchestra the night before, doing a magnificent job. It was, all in all, pretty successful. A local FM station (KSJN) broadcast a tape of the Atlanta performance of Treemonisha and broadcast a program built around the ragtime panel discussion. The events were held at the University of Minnesota, and Max Morath made three appearances at the Hall Brothers Emporium of Jazz in Mendota, Minn. concurrently.

William J. Schafer
Assoc. Prof. of English
Berea College, Kentucky

(Ed. Comment: The book review by Allen MacInnes in this issue of THE RAGTIMER, deals with THE ART OF RAGTIME being the newly published book by the team of Schafer and Riedel/Polad and Thompson. We are counting on the receipt of a further review from Bill Long of Bloomington, Indiana.)

****

Mr. & Mrs. Harold D. Retting
110 Ledgerock Lane
Rochester, N.Y. 14618
Phone 716-275-0238

Hal Retting is a new member recently moved to Rochester and would like to meet fellow ragtimers in the area.

****

J. W. Wilson IV
6304 Montrose Road
Niagara Falls, Ontario

Interested especially in ragtime on guitar, banjo, mandolin, dobro, uke. Would like to exchange tapes.

****

Glenn F. Hewitt
5059 N. Kildare
Chicago, Illinois 60630

Asks if any Ragtimers live in his area.

****

Charles B. Castner
20 Indian Hills Trail
Louisville, Ky. 40207

Any members in Kentucky or Southern Indiana.

SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN
- at Clementine's Piano bar, 5 Hayden Street, Toronto, Mon. to Fri. 5:30 p. m. to 8:00 p. m.
- in the Odyssey Lounge at the top of the Hyatt Regency, Toronto, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.

EUBIE BLAKE
- Guest of Honour at the 9th Annual Bash of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY at Toronto, October 13.

RAGTIME BOB DARCH
- at CLUB 76, St. Clair Avenue W., Toronto, Sept. 4 to Oct. 27.
- at Quality Motel, Carlisle, Pa., Nov. 12 to Dec. 8.

BOB DURST
- "RAJAH OF RAGTIME" at Northern Hotel, Billings, Montana, Sept. 24 to Nov. 17. At Holiday Inn, Occalala, Nebraska, Nov. 26 to Dec. 8.

DON EWELL
- at the Life Lounge, 3233 N. Ocean Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with Andy Bartha and the Deep South Dixieland Jazz Band.
- at Ocean Manor every Saturday from 3:00 p. m. to 5:00.
- at Beowulf Restaurant, 4000 N. Federal Hwy., Lighthouse point, every Sunday from 7:00 p. m. to 11:00.

DAVE FLOWITT
- at the Brunswick Hotel, 481 Bloor St. W., with the Climax Jazz Band, Wed. 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.
- at Grossman's Tavern, 379 Spadina Ave., with Dr. MacJazz band, Thurs. 8:30 p. m. to 12:30 a. m.

JIM KAPLAN	- at the Pizza-Stein, 1428 W. Galena Ave., Freeport, Illinois on Tues., Fri. and Sundays.
JOHN MADDOX	- at Bon Marche, Seattle, Wash., Oct. 22 to Dec. 1.
	- at Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, Colorado, Dec. 3 to Jan 6/74
BOB MILLS	- at Ports of Call, 1145 Yonge St., Toronto, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m. Mon. to Sat.
MIKE MONTGOMERY	- at The Dakota Inn, Rathskeller, Detroit, Mich. Friday nights.
MAX MORATH	- on the road with his show "At The Turn Of The Century".
DR. ELI NEWBERBER	- and The New Black Eagle Jazz Band at the Stickey Wicket Pub, West Main Street, Hopkinton, Mass. Weds. 7:30 p. m. to 11:30 p. m.
TOM NOEL	- on the road with his living portrayal show "Mark Twain At Home". (More details contained in article about Tom in this issue of THE RAGTIMER.)
ALEXANDER "RAGTIME" READ	- at New Crest Tavern, 525 Mt. Pleasant Rd., Toronto, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.
BOB SEELEY	- at Charlie's Crab Restaurant & Lounge, 3230 Pine Lake Rd., Orchard Lake, Michigan, Mon. thru Sat.
STEVE SPRACKLEN	- at CLUB 76, 76 St. Clair Avenue W., Toronto, Oct. 29 to Dec. 8.
DAN SUMMERS	- and the New Charleston Chasers (with the ODJB sound), Whirlpool St. at Cleveland Avenue, Niagara Falls, N. Y., Fri. & Sat. nights.
TREBOR TICHENOR	- and the Saint Louis Ragtimers, on The Goldenrod Showboat, at St. Louis, Missouri.
TERRY WALDO	- at Deibel's Restaurant, German Village, Columbus, Ohio, Wed. & Thurs. nights.
TEX WYNDHAM	- and The Red Lion Jazz Band, appearing regularly, at The Surry Restaurant, 1100 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Del.

PERFORMERS: Please keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

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